

Date: February 7, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Education
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for SCR34/SR30, Relating to the Early Learning Board's Composition and Charter

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS supports passage of SCR34/SR30, which request the Early Learning Board to evaluate and report to the Legislature regarding the Board's composition and charter, and to develop a strategic plan.

The Early Learning Board (ELB) is tasked with formulating statewide policy relating to early learning, and counts among its responsibilities:

- Directing the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) on how best to meet the developmental and educational needs of children, from prenatal care to entry into kindergarten; and
- Providing recommendations to EOEL on improving the quality, availability, and coordination of early learning programs.

Since the adoption of ELB's charter in 2014, the ELB has evolved from acting in an advisory capacity to a governing capacity, and has experienced multiple efforts to amend or add to the composition of its membership. These efforts have been based primarily on the need and desire to expand and diversify representation of stakeholders in decision-making related to the build-out of the state's early care and learning system.

A key tenet in ECAS' policy and advocacy work is that efforts to address inequities and reduce disparities for vulnerable populations and underserved communities should be embedded into every aspect of early childhood systems design and service delivery. A critical component to addressing inequities and reducing disparities is to ensure equitable representation in those systems and institutions that play pivotal roles in the determination of policies and development of services.

SCR34/SR30 would help charge the ELB to engage in an intentional, strategic effort to ensure appropriate stakeholders and a diversity of perspectives, particularly those of the traditionally under-served and under-represented, are incorporated into the Board's membership and are meaningfully engaged in the ongoing development of Hawai'i's early care and learning system.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of these resolutions.

LATE



Hawai'i
Children's Action Network Speaks!
Building a unified voice for Hawai'i's children

To: Senator Kidani, Chair
Senator Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

Re: **SCR 34/ SR 30, Requesting The Early Learning Board To Evaluate And Report To The Legislature Regarding The Board's Composition And Charter And To Develop A Strategic Plan.**
3:15 PM, March 18, 2022

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado Kim, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to **provide comments on SCR 34/ SR30, Requesting The Early Learning Board To Evaluate And Report To The Legislature Regarding The Board's Composition And Charter And To Develop A Strategic Plan.**

The Early Learning Board is charged with:

- Directing the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) on how best to meet the developmental and educational needs of children, from prenatal care to entry into kindergarten;
- Providing recommendations to EOEL on improving the quality, availability, and coordination of early learning programs;
- Promoting collaboration across agencies and stakeholders serving young children; and
- Appointing the EOEL director and evaluating the director on an annual basis.

While the Board has grown in size in recent years, the actions taken by the Board have not. Rather than try to have a “representative” board, which is impractical due to the variety of programs, services, and families that ELB oversees, the Board should consider limiting the number of members and having certain qualities that Board members should possess. An example would be to say the board members shall consist of at least one member from each County including Maui, Honolulu, Kauai, and Hawaii representing the early childhood education and care community, early intervention and medicine community, and individuals with expertise in areas such as law, Hawaiian immersion programs, and research related to early childhood.

The children and families in Hawai'i deserve a strong, well-functioning Early Learning Board. We appreciate the opportunity this resolution offers the Board.

Thank you,

Kathleen Algire
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy